

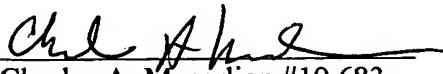
Applicants respectfully traverse this requirement since as noted by the Examiner, all the species fall within the scope of claim 1 and should be examined together. Moreover, the Examiner's grouping of the claims is not believed to be correct.

Applicants believe that Figs. 4, 6 and 7 belong together and Figs. 1 to 4 present spacer 6 and Fig. 7 presents spacer 7. The link between Figs. 4 and 7 is given on page 5, sec. para., first line ("In the side view of the spacers 6 (or 7) shown in Fig. 4, a V-shaped notch is to be seen that serves to retain the spacers..."). Due to the fact that spacer 7 is presented in Fig. 7, accordingly, Figs. 4 and 7 show one and the same embodiment.

The link between Fig. 6 and 7 is given on page 4, last para., first sentence ("A further embodiment of a spacer 7 is shown in Figs. 5 to 7") and on [age 5, penultimate para., first sentence (".. the spacers 7 can additionally comprise pockets 12.."). The vertical section shown in Fig. 6 therefore is applicable for both spacers 6 and 7. In other words, the spacer 7 as presented in Fig. 7 is also presented in Figs. 4 and 6. The following claims can be read on this spacer: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9.

Since the first Office Action was merely an election of species, a prompt examination on the merits is requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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Enclosures



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